

Testimonial in support of Tunxis Community College

Given by: Christopher LaPorte – Tunxis Community College class of 1998

When I was in high school, my friends and I often discussed our college plans and the different colleges available to us. When the phrase “community college” came up, a negative stigma would surface.

We considered a community college to be an inferior institution that was more aligned with providing a high school education than a college one. We assumed that the lower cost community college tuition translated into a lower quality education with fewer student services. As a result, my friends pursued their educations at private institutions throughout the New England. As for myself, I was eighteen years old, and, of course, I knew everything there was to know about life. I made the decision to work full-time in a retail position and forego a college education.

Four years later, in 1993, I found myself laid off from my retail management position, the victim of the early 1990's recession. At the same time, my friends were coming home from college with degrees that provided them the opportunities necessary to compete in a tight job market. I realized that I needed to do something about my situation. I realized that I needed to go to college.

As I pulled into the parking lot at Tunxis Community College, I sat in my car for over an hour. I pondered whether or not to give a community college a chance. Finally, I made the decision to walk into Tunxis and inquire about classes. As I walked through the doors, I was greeted by a passing faculty member who seemed to notice the lost look on my face. She invited me into her office for a chat. Upon leaving her office, I felt confident enough to sign up for two classes.

Within the first week of attending classes at Tunxis, I was completely absolved of any negative stigma I ever had about a community college. I interacted with faculty and staff who were genuinely interested in helping my classmates and I achieve our goals. Students of varying age, creed, gender, and ability surrounded me. I found individuals like me, who had been laid off or who had never attended college. I was so inspired by my college experience at Tunxis that I applied for a clerical position there.

Nearly sixteen years have passed since I first entered the doors at Tunxis Community College. Where I was once a young, wandering soul without any direction in life, today, I am a successful man with an advanced education and a passion for helping others. Tunxis Community College provided me the tools and the guidance to believe in myself. Thanks to Tunxis, I realized that I could earn a college degree, just like my friends did earlier. I earned an Associate degree with high honors in Business in 1998. However, I was not done yet. The education I received at Tunxis afforded me the opportunity to advance to baccalaureate studies at CCSU. Four years later, I earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Management at CCSU, graduating 24th in my class of 1398 students. This past summer, I completed a Master's degree in Management, graduating tops in my class with a perfect 4.0 grade point average.

While I was pursuing my college education, there was something else that my Tunxis experience inspired me to do. I learned first-hand, a quality trait that embodies everything that I do in life today. I learned to pay it forward. I progressed through the employment ranks through the years at Tunxis, eventually reaching my current position where I direct Student Activities and conduct academic advising for students. Every day, I seize the opportunity to change the lives of others, the same way that Tunxis changed my life. The students realize that when I encourage them with their academic studies, that I am speaking from experience.

Just as a Master mechanic is not a master without his or her tools, I would not have been successful without the tools that made success in my life possible. Those tools are the tools acquired through my journey with Tunxis. It is a journey that happily continues to this day; a journey where I still acquire new tools daily in my quest to help others and to learn from them as well. I am forever indebted to Tunxis Community College for not only changing my life, but for teaching me a lifelong quality that helps me to change the lives of others.

Christopher LaPorte